

Internship Report from the Colca Valley

Patrick Kidd, Yaritza Hernandez and Jacqueline Wiese

School of Design, University of Pennsylvania

30 September 2009

BACKGROUND

Over five weeks in the summer of 2009, three graduate students from the Historic Preservation program at the University of Pennsylvania—Patrick Kidd (MCP, MSHP), Yaritza Hernandez (MSHP) and Jacqueline Wiese (MSHP) --participated in a summer internship directed and funded by the World Monuments Fund (WMF) and the *Agencia Española Cooperativa Internacional de Desarrollo (AECID)* in the Colca Valley of southern Peru. The WMF is currently sponsoring AECID as it undertakes the restoration of the Catholic church located in the village of Canocota, one of many projects across the country carried out by the organization.

WORK COMPLETED

The students spent the first two weeks acquainting themselves with the operations of AECID, which included working with staff members in each department, such as conservation, mapping, architecture, and regional planning. Although based in the town of Chivay, AECID directs activities throughout the 50+ mile long valley, interacting with various artisan groups, local and provincial governments, and members of the National Institute of Culture based in Lima. The students accompanied José Carrión, manager of the AECID Colca Valley project, on site visits to view restoration work at Sibayo and Canocota, learning about the challenges of rehabilitating these 16th and 17th century structures so that they may once again be effectively used by their congregations, as well as become potential visitor attractions in a region of Peru that is off the standard tourism circuit.



Figure 1: *Understanding project timelines for activities within the Colca Valley*



Figure 2: *Reviewing proposed floor plans for housing using traditional building methods*



Figure 3: *Site visit to the church at Canocota*



Figure 4: Local residents trained by AECID working on scaffolding for the church in Sibayo.

AECID specifically hires local townspeople in its projects in order to help instill a sense of pride in citizens regarding their collective cultural patrimony. Women are encouraged to apply for work in these projects, so that they may learn skills beyond the traditional role of keeper of the home and fields. The subsistence economy of the valley discourages job creation, and therefore local youth are also targeted by AECID job programs, persuading them to remain in their home communities. This segment of the population can gain expertise in areas like woodworking, art conservation, masonry, tourism management, and agriculture.

One of the greatest challenges facing the Colca Valley today is pressure from increasing tourism; unknown to most Peruvians and foreigners just a decade ago, the region is fast becoming a destination for its beautiful scenery, wildlife, and historic towns, which remain relatively untouched by modern construction techniques or intrusions, instead retaining their original layouts and architectural details. Chivay, capital of the region and the main tourist center, has seen many recent affronts to its urban form in the construction of new hotels that do not conform to its low profile, material palette, or local construction methods. In this early period of tourism growth, it is important that other towns learn from Chivay's experience. They must understand the ways in which they may preserve their historic architectural fabric and cultural landscapes, welcoming visitors who are drawn by this place but who also demand a level of convenience that varies from the local norm.

In order to explore the physical changes that current growth is creating in the towns, the students undertook a comparison study of two settlements. Chivay was chosen because it is the principal center of the valley and has experienced the most alteration due to its direct transportation links to the wider region beyond the valley. Sibayo was picked because its location on the periphery means that it has for the most part retained traditional patterns in its urban form, architectural language, and social uses.

In the spirit of the Shippee-Johnson Expedition of 1931 which extensively photographed the Colca Valley for *National Geographic Magazine*, the students completed a photo and materials survey for these two towns. Each survey focused on the main plaza and church, and proceeded to document the streets radiating out from

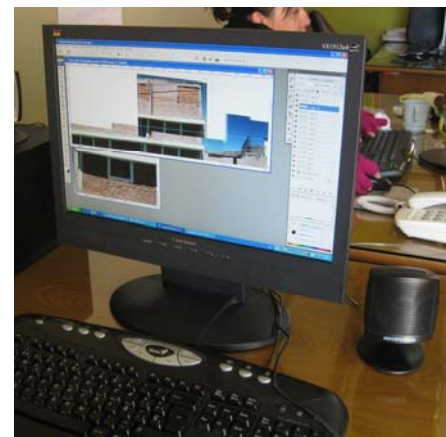


Figure 5: "Working in the Office"- Organization of photo montages for Documentation and Context Study

this central public space. At AECID headquarters, the photos were placed into montages for easy comparison of structures and materials. This documentation can be viewed in their report, *The Colca Valley: A Context Study and Documentation for Chivay and Sibayo*, which explains the project in greater detail.

THE WMF IN PERU

One of the five core program areas for the WMF is Cultural Legacy, or “saving important cultural heritage sites from damage and destruction.” To this end, WMF support of AECID’s work is very important, helping to bring the church at Canocota back to life. Damaged extensively in the 2001 earthquake, AECID is working on every element of the structure, which is sited in a small village along the Colca River where the population of some three hundred families simply cannot carry out the restoration work unassisted.

When the students visited over the course of six weeks, the roof of the structure was being repaired. Originally paved with native *laja* stone, the roof was covered with numerous cement repairs throughout the 20th century to keep out water. Unfortunately, this method was not successful, leading to cracks in the surface which allowed water to seep into the church and damage wall surfaces as well as art works. The local workers were steadily removing layers of cement with a chisel and mallet, working their way towards the original stone vault. The 2001 earthquake severely damaged one bell tower, which has been taken apart and rebuilt. The large structural crack running along the ridge of the roofline will be addressed once the new roof is in place, and AECID can then concentrate further on the interior decoration, giving greater attention to the painted wall surfaces, statuary, and oil paintings.

Since 1998, AECID has worked on various churches in the Colca Valley, many of which had not received appropriate maintenance in decades due to the poverty of the area. Buildings, paintings, woodwork, and statuary had all deteriorated, demanding a concerted effort to deter further damage. AECID has assembled a talented staff of architects, planners, art conservators, art historians, and business persons who have



Figure 6: AECID architect describing how a local family may participate in a housing improvement program

diligently worked to make the most of their modest budget. The support of the WMF is truly invaluable, allowing the organization to broaden its outreach. Through its Cultural Patrimony Program for Community Development, AECID has been working in the Colca Valley and producing very visible results, which the students were able to see firsthand in the form of actual job production and enhanced living conditions for the local population. It is obvious that what started as a plan for the restoration and maintenance of twelve churches throughout the Colca Valley has grown into something much more substantial for this region of Peru. AECID has taken on additional roles such as educator and community developer, helping the local population to understand the value of its patrimony, teach job skills useful in conservation and beyond, and demonstrating the ways in which cultural patrimony may be used to attract tourists and therefore economic development.

This fall, AECID launched a program of *talleres*, or workshops, to further develop local expertise in carpentry, masonry, tourism, and agriculture. Not only will these skilled laborers be able to participate in the long term maintenance of the churches, but they also will have valuable skills that can translate into long term employment and the improvement of their standards of living. Many of these *talleres* are aimed at providing education to young people who might otherwise leave the Colca Valley to seek work in cities such as Arequipa and Lima. Training one generation provides hope that the next generation and the ones that follow will retain these skills, creating a professional craftsmen class serving the needs of the region.



Figure 7: An apprentice learns the art of stone carving at Sibayo

Many organizations such as AECID devote themselves to conservation, but have no mandate or resources to create advocacy programs. Although there is an increasing presence of tourism in the valley, many who come to enjoy nature or visit the historic towns and their churches are not well informed of their importance. There is no entity besides AECID to truly advocate for the continued protection and promotion of the churches and related sites. Tourism information is lacking, and the churches are often closed in the middle of the day when tourists are most interested in visiting them. Although they function as active parishes, there is a way to accommodate both the faithful and the tourists, who help boost local economies. AECID's business manager is involved with efforts to develop the tourist trade and ensure dividends for local communities, but lack of funds prohibits extensive programming. Sustained tourism revenues could be used to fund routine maintenance and create "trust funds" for future conservation programs.

In regards to capacity building, AECID still has much work to do among the population and local governments, and this should be supported by organizations such as the WMF. Agreement on appropriate levels of tourism and conservation can be hard to achieve in the valley, as many regional officials, the National Institute of Culture, and town mayors all want a say. With a small staff devoted mainly to conservation, AECID does not have the capacity to undertake extensive discussions with each level of government or to bring all of the stakeholders to the same table for talks.

AECID would also like to survey local laws to begin consideration of a regional preservation strategy, but strained resources preclude this next step. If the cultural and economic value of patrimony is not better understood by local officials and the population, then its future maintenance and care remains in doubt; the decade of work by AECID could become a onetime effort with no follow up. This situation faces many conservation organizations across the region and world, and greater support needs to be provided to those willing to undertake necessary actions and reforms to build consensus in the preservation of cultural patrimony. AECID recently began to develop a regional plan for development and conservation within the valley; endeavors such as this need the continued support of the WMF and others.

EXPENDITURE OF WMF FUNDS

Funds provided by the WMF were primarily used to cover airfare between US cities and Arequipa, Peru. While housing was generously provided by AECID at its Chivay headquarters, food and other associated travel costs were born by the students. Funds also allowed the students to spend a few days in Arequipa, the regional capital, where they were able to observe the historic and artistic links between that city and the valley, which is accessed by a four hour bus trip.



Figures 8 and 9: *The church of the Immaculate Conception at Yanque (l) and the Jesuit church at Arequipa (r and center) both display similar "tapestries" of carved stone, demonstrating artistic influences between the major regional metropolis and the valley*

In Arequipa, they had the opportunity to meet officials of the Colca Autonomous Authority (Autocolca). Together, AECID and Autocolca are working on the initial stages of the master plan for the future preservation and development of the Colca Valley.

CONCLUSION

During trips to Arequipa and throughout their time alongside the AECID team in Chivay, the students learned extensively about the challenges that exist today between the stakeholders of this region. While the complexities of protecting historic resources internationally are often quite challenging, they are also comparable to the complex relationships between local, state, and federal governmental entities here in the United States. Understanding these relationships is necessary in order to achieve results, especially in underfunded and understaffed historic preservation or development agencies, and non-profit organizations.

The internship experience was very enlightening and has inspired us to look at the context of cultural resources on another level. As one of the students mentioned recently on the WMF blog; "It is clearer now that things are not so different from one person's home to the next. We all have a history to protect and a community to protect it for."